



# **PRESS RELEASE**

## **House Armed Services Committee**

### **Floyd D. Spence, Chairman**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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#### **STATEMENT BY CHAIRMAN FLOYD SPENCE AT HOUSE FLOOR CONSIDERATION OF H.RES. 534**

Mr. Speaker, five weeks ago the Department of Energy informed Congress that two computer hard drives containing a large quantity of classified nuclear weapons data were missing from the Los Alamos National Laboratory and had been missing for at least six weeks.

This breach of security was just the last in a long and sorry history of lax security at our nuclear weapons laboratories. In direct response, Congress last year created a semi-autonomous agency—the National Nuclear Security Administration or NNSA—and charged it with the responsibility to better manage the nation's nuclear weapons complex.

Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson opposed this new organization from the beginning and has sought to undermine the implementation of the NNSA at every step. Contrary to congressional direction, he declared himself as the Administrator for Nuclear Security, and he “dual hatted” his own chiefs of security and counterintelligence to serve in those positions for both the DOE and NNSA.

While this arrangement is directly counter to the law, it leaves no doubt as to who was running the new Administration and who was responsible for security at the labs in June. In fact, Secretary Richardson and the senior DOE leadership told Congress repeatedly that the security problems at the nuclear weapons laboratories were being fixed.

In May 1999, Secretary Richardson stated that the “safeguards of national secrets have been dramatically strengthened and improved.” On March 2, 2000, Secretary Richardson testified to the Armed Services Committee that “we’ve reached a point where we have very strong security procedures,” and “there’s no longer a culture of lax security. That has ended.” Furthermore, the Secretary’s independent oversight office recently reviewed security practices at Los Alamos National Laboratory and stated that they were “first class.”

Of course, Mr. Speaker, this latest episode at Los Alamos has demonstrated these assertions to be false. Through briefings and hearings, the Armed Services Committee determined that security procedures at the labs continue to be unacceptably lax and ineffective. We learned that no log was kept of the individuals who entered the vault where the hard drives were stored, that the Department was not even aware of how many people have access to the vault, and that the vault was inadequately secured.

I simply cannot understand how any reasonably comprehensive review of the laboratory's security procedures would conclude that such procedures were adequate, much less "first class."

H. Res. 534 appropriately expresses concern by the House of Representatives over security matters within the National Nuclear Laboratories and calls for immediate corrective action. It also expresses the view that those responsible for these serious lapses in security must be held accountable.

The senior leadership of the Department chose to accept responsibility for the management of the NNSA and eagerly and erroneously claimed credit for improving security. They must now accept responsibility for their failures as well.

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